



General Assembly

Amendment

February Session, 2026

LCO No. 5295



Offered by:

REP. BUMGARDNER, 41st Dist.

REP. PEMBERTON, 139th Dist.

REP. PARKER, 101st Dist.

SEN. LOPES, 6th Dist.

REP. CALLAHAN, 108th Dist.

SEN. OSTEN, 19th Dist.

To: Subst. House Bill No. 5523

File No. 436

Cal. No. 319

**"AN ACT CONCERNING A TRIBAL WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES
ADVISORY COUNCIL."**

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and substitute the
2 following in lieu thereof:

3 "Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) There is established a
4 Connecticut Tribal Wildlife and Fisheries Advisory Council within the
5 legislative branch. Said advisory council shall consist of the following
6 members who voluntarily agree to serve on such advisory council: (1)
7 Two members from each of the federal or state-recognized tribes
8 identified in subsection (b) of section 47-59a of the general statutes; (2)
9 the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, or the
10 commissioner's designee; (3) one member each from the Department of
11 Energy and Environmental Protection's Wildlife Division and Fisheries
12 Division, as appointed by the Commissioner of Energy and
13 Environmental Protection; (4) one member from the Department of
14 Agriculture, as appointed by the Commissioner of Agriculture; (5) one
15 member from the Bureau of Aquaculture of the Department of

16 Agriculture, as appointed by the Commissioner of Agriculture; (6) one
17 member from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, as
18 appointed by the director of said station; (7) one member from
19 Connecticut Sea Grant, as appointed by such organization; (8) one
20 member from the Native American and Indigenous Studies Department
21 at The University of Connecticut, as appointed by the head of such
22 department; (9) one representative of a land conservation organization,
23 appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate; (10) one
24 representative of a watershed advocacy organization, appointed by the
25 speaker of the House of Representatives; (11) one representative of the
26 Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council; (12) one representative of an
27 avian conservation organization, appointed by the Senate minority
28 leader; (13) one representative of a sportsmen or hunting organization,
29 appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives; (14)
30 one representative of the Native American Heritage Advisory Council,
31 appointed by the Governor; (15) the Long Island Soundkeeper, or the
32 Soundkeeper's designee; and (16) the chairpersons and ranking
33 members of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly
34 having cognizance of matters relating to the environment, or the
35 designees of such chairpersons and ranking members.

36 (b) The tribal members of the advisory council shall develop written
37 processes and procedures for conducting council business and holding
38 meetings, which shall be distributed to all members of the advisory
39 council.

40 (c) Such advisory council shall:

41 (1) Make recommendations to the Department of Energy and
42 Environmental Protection on how state fish and wildlife conservation
43 plans and policies can integrate tribal ecological knowledge and
44 stewardship practices; and

45 (2) Promote the sustainable use of natural resources consistent with
46 state conservation goals.

47 (d) Nothing in this section shall be construed to apply to lands held
48 in federal trust for any tribe or to reservation lands that remain under
49 tribal jurisdiction.

50 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) The provisions of this section
51 shall apply only to the following licenses and permits that are issued
52 pursuant to chapter 490 of the general statutes: (1) Recreational fishing
53 licenses; (2) hunting licenses; (3) trapping licenses; and (4) archery
54 permits. Nothing in this section shall be construed to waive or replace
55 any federal permit, stamp or registration requirement applicable under
56 federal law.

57 (b) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall
58 issue any license or permit, specified in subsection (a) of this section to
59 any resident of the state who is also an enrolled member of a federally
60 or state-recognized tribe identified in subsection (b) of section 47-59a of
61 the general statutes for lawful activities conducted outside of
62 reservation lands in the state, provided the associated fees for such
63 licenses or permits are satisfied through a funding mechanism
64 approved by the commissioner and at no cost to such member.

65 (c) For purposes of eligibility verification under this section, an
66 applicant shall satisfy any one of the following methods:

67 (1) The applicant presents a valid identification card issued by a
68 federally or state-recognized tribe identified in subsection (b) of section
69 47-59a of the general statutes that demonstrates enrollment in such tribe;
70 or

71 (2) The applicant uses any additional reasonable, lawful method and
72 procedure for verification, including, but not limited to, procedures for
73 verification by municipalities, that the commissioner may establish, in
74 consultation with the tribes.

75 (d) After receiving an application for a license or permit, specified in
76 subsection (a) of this section, the commissioner shall verify such

77 applicant's eligibility within a reasonable time period.

78 (e) Any activities conducted pursuant to this section shall remain
79 subject to all state conservation laws and regulations, seasons and
80 species protections pursuant to chapter 490 of the general statutes and
81 all state laws and regulations applicable to state parks and forests
82 pursuant to chapter 447 of the general statutes. Each such resident tribal
83 member shall comply with all applicable safety and education
84 requirements under said chapters of the general statutes and any
85 applicable federal requirements governing the taking of migratory birds
86 or other federally regulated species, including any required registration,
87 reporting or federal permits or stamps.

88 (f) The Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management on an
89 ongoing and annual basis shall allocate funds from the Mashantucket
90 Pequot and Mohegan Fund to the Department of Energy and
91 Environmental Protection for the purpose of satisfying the fees
92 associated with licenses and permits issued pursuant to this section.

93 (g) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall
94 ensure that all licenses and permits issued pursuant to this section are
95 recorded as part of the standard licensing system, including the value
96 of such licenses, permits and the source of funds used to satisfy such
97 fees, for purposes of maintaining auditable records and compliance with
98 federal Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration requirements. Such records
99 shall be maintained in a manner consistent with sections 26-15 and 26-
100 15a of the general statutes and shall be included in any reports required
101 for federal reimbursement or program compliance.

102 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) The Commissioner of Agriculture
103 shall prioritize tribal meat, fish and aquaculture processing facilities for
104 technical assistance, United States Department of Agriculture
105 certification support and eligibility for state or federal infrastructure
106 funding programs. Such prioritization shall support tribal food
107 sovereignty, local food systems and community-based economic
108 development.

109 Sec. 4. Section 47-65a of the general statutes is repealed and the
 110 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

111 Notwithstanding the provisions of section 26-27, any Indian may
 112 take, hunt or trap any wild bird or quadruped on, or take or assist in
 113 taking any fish or bait species in the waters of, the reservation of such
 114 Indian's tribe without a license therefor, subject to the regulations
 115 promulgated by the council and to such seasonal and bag limitations as
 116 may be provided by law. The Commissioner of Energy and
 117 Environmental Protection shall issue, without fee, a private land deer
 118 permit to any Indian for use only on the reservation of such Indian's
 119 tribe, provided such reservation is not less than [two hundred fifty] ten
 120 acres in size and provided further no such Indian shall be issued more
 121 than one such permit per season. Such permit shall allow the use of a
 122 rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader or bow and arrow on such reservation land
 123 from November first until December thirty-first, inclusive, of each year.

124 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) Any federally or state-recognized
 125 tribe identified in subsection (b) of section 47-59a of the general statutes
 126 shall submit a report to the Office of Policy and Management that lists
 127 any additional state-issued permits, licenses, endorsements or stamps,
 128 and the costs thereof, purchased by resident tribal members that are
 129 required for the activities described in section 2 of this act. The Secretary
 130 of the Office of Policy and Management, on an ongoing and annual
 131 basis, shall allocate funds from the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan
 132 Fund to any tribe that submits a report pursuant to this section for the
 133 purpose of refunding such fees associated with such additional permits,
 134 licenses, endorsements or stamps required for such activities."

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	July 1, 2026	New section
Sec. 2	July 1, 2026	New section
Sec. 3	July 1, 2026	New section
Sec. 4	July 1, 2026	47-65a

Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
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